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MEMORIAL.

Josephine A. Richardson.

Mrs. Josephine A. Richardson,

WIFE OF MR. CHARLES W. RICHARDSON, DIED OCTOBER 17TH, 1871;

AGED 37 YEARS.

FUNERAL REMARKS.

BY REV. AUGUSTINE CALDWELL.

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FUNERAL REMARKS.

[October 20, 1871.]

Psalm 103 : 14—"He Remembereth that we are Dust."

It is not certain what occasion called forth the psalm from which the text is selected. One thing is sure, it is the breathing of a spirit that knew truly what the way of sorrow is when it is sanctified by a simple trust in God.

David held the cup in one hand, and wrote out the consolations God gave him with the other. Two things are strongly expressed in the psalm, (1) Life's Discipline; and (2) God's Love.

(1) That life has its multiplied hours of conflict and pains we need not revelation to declare. We see it everywhere. Our friends, our neighbors, have seasons of distress. We in turn come to a thorny path. When Madame Guyon

was going on her mission, her little daughter made crosses —very many of them—and pinned them to her mother's dress. When Madame Guyon turned from conversing with her friend, she saw herself covered with them. She felt that God was teaching her by this that her mission life would be a way of sorrow, as indeed it was.

So we all become conscious that life brings its discipline, its cross—that is, to people who will *live Godly*. We are not sure that the lives of all who are indifferent to the great concerns of the soul are so disciplined. The ancient writer said that it perplexed him to see the *righteous* only in sorrow. Some have all their good things here. But to all the righteous—yes, *all* the righteous—there is the cup to drink, the cross to bear, the thorn to press; and this we know, this we see—griefs are all about us.

(2) But there is the other side presented by the psalmist that we do not see so readily—the fact that God "*knoweth*" all about this, and that He is interested in it all, and will sanctify us through the trial.

This we learn only by inspiration. Not simply from the inspired words—for we may read them, and yet be utterly ignorant of them. But when the loving Father breathes over again His own words into our hearts, and they thus become to us full of life, and power, and beauty, and sweetness, O, how wonderfully precious divine truths are!

We have been conscious that we had trials; *we* have felt the pressure of them; but now the spirit teaches that *God* is also conscious of them—is afflicted with us.

He *remembers* all this—remembers that we are dust—only dust—utterly weak, helpless ; only dust while the breath is in us ; only dust when the breath is gone ; and remembering this, O, how he loves us, and pities us, and soothes us.

To-day we look into this coffin—we see written there —"Dust." There is no trace of life ; no pulse-throb. The hand is not held out to welcome. But let the thought be breathed into us by the Holy Spirit that God *remembereth* this ; that, just as we are looking on the face of the dead, so is He, and remembering all about it, and promising to keep this little dust till the blessed resurrection morning, and then restore it again. How this very thought that God *is* reaching down His hand in pity and love and gathering into his loving keeping what we hold dear, comforts and soothes us.

The words chosen for reflection on this occasion, however, do not refer simply to the care or thoughtfulness of God over the body when it is going back to dust, but it has reference also

(*a*) To the frailties and imperfections, the wanderings, and all the lack of perfectness there is in us. God remembereth all this—not in anger, not in chiding, but in pity, in love, in compassion. He remembereth our *sins*. And because of this remembrance He points out the way of escape and cleansing. He knows we are too weak to establish a way of righteousness for ourselves, so he sends healing for us. Jesus comes and washes us white—O, how white in His own precious blood. How blessed that God remembers our sins that He may wash them all out.

(*b*) He remembers our bodily infirmities—the pains—the sufferings, and when *we are in Christ*, not one pain can come to us contrary to His will. Fully in Christ, and everything will be His will. The hours of suffering that those have who are obedient to His will come because He sees best to make them polished diamonds in His kingdom. How many of His dear ones are crowned by His own hand with days of suffering, that they may be fitted for that wonderful glory that will appear when Jesus shall reach out His wounded hand and lead them for presentation to the Father.

God remembers our sorrows to-day; He is counting every thought, every tear, everything connected with this sad occasion.

Not one of us ever had a grief but God knew it, and how we shall wonder when, with all a father's love, He seats us at His side in glory, and explains to us why it was His will that we should be in sorrow.

O, His blessed will; how sweet *to do it*, and how sweet also *to suffer it*.

(*c*) "He *remembereth*." Let us for a moment glean comfort from the expression. It is not a passing thought with Him. It is not a gleam breaking now and then from memory; this would be like the human mind. We cannot always retain a thought; we cannot keep even our holiest thoughts continuously. Sweet experiences are faded by time, just as the picture fades, and the leaf, and the inklings of the pen. We cannot keep even our sorrows fresh. When we stand by the open grave we think the hour will

never lose its freshness, but time rolls us farther and farther away. Things which we greatly wish to treasure—that it is even pain to think of forgetting—will escape from us. But *He remembereth.* Can anything be so comforting? He keeps them always in mind. And all the sorrows and griefs and joys, and all that pertains to the lives of any and all His own, He remembereth, and will to all eternity.

"He remembers"—a parallel to that beautiful, inspired text—"*He thinketh on me.*"

"He remembereth that we are dust." Let us whisper this to-day as we gather on this sacred occasion. Dust—going back to dust. The last hold to life severed—the hand finally unclasped. But God knows it. It is not a fatality. God does not say—"O, it can't be helped. Every one of earth's children must go back to dust—let death strike when and where it pleases." He remembers about it, and how tenderly and fully He prepares the heart for it. The context says He removes our transgressions as far as the east is from the west; and thus He makes the heart ready for the change. Sin makes the dread, and sin gone as far as the east is from the west, and the dread is gone.

Sometimes God tells people that they are going back to dust—just as He did good old Elisha. You remember how it was said to his pupils, "Knoweth thou that God will take him away to-day." And they went up to the mountain top and saw the good old man go to glory in his chariot of fire. Paul knew he was going. "The time of my departure is at hand."

Our departed friend, about whose remains we gather

to-day, came down to the dust through long months of pain and weariness. Step by step, down to the dust—one thought after another yielded—one hope after another surrendered—till finally she said "I am dying."

To many how desirable it seems to be made conscious that death is coming. To others, the wish is never to have the curtain drawn. But whether we know it or not, God remembers all about it. She whose spirit has gone to the Father has doubtless learned ere this that the Lord in His love remembered all the wearisome, restless way to the grave.

Her hold upon life was very tenacious. She kept disease and death as far from her as possible. And yet, when the last struggle came, when death reached out his hand and grasped her's, there was not an expressed wish to stay longer. The hour that has such a dread to it, that even the holiest find it hard to think of it, came finally to her, and she passed through without shrinking. Those who were with her say that she was entirely calm. Taking one, and then another, of her children and friends by the hand, she gave the parting token. Her words were few; not more so, however, in dying than in health. She never expressed much; but what she said in death was sufficient.

To her nearest neighbor who came in and was with her during these final hours, she said, "I am dying." And when this friend queried if death had any terrors, she said she had no fears.

I remember several months ago, after an attack that seemed to bring death near, she said, "I felt very calm

about dying." I said, "You have the assurance that it will be well with you, have you?" She replied, "I think it must be well with me or I should not feel so calm."

The life that has ended here has indeed been a blessing in this home. How diligently the hands now still have been employed; how carefully have the varied duties of home been performed.

And of these dear children to whom she gave a mother's care, it can surely be said in her praise that when she could no longer take the guiding hand in her home, so carefully had her hand led them, and well, that they not only relieved her from care, but also, hour by hour, watched at her bedside, and made as easy as possible the latest days of her life.

And how tender and touching that tribute she paid in her dying days to the faithful and loving care of these children; when she said that during all these months of feebleness, when she was conscious that disease had robbed her of her accustomed self-control, that they had never manifested weariness or impatience, but had attended to her wishes, and had been all that she desired, and how sweet to-day will come that promise of the Father to the children that honor and are obedient to the will and wish of the parent.

To you, dear brother, and to your children, God brings His comforts. You have done as best you could for her who is gone. She appreciated it all.

Many times you have all bowed at the altar together, and united prayer has ascended. One who joined with you

will do so no more; but we doubt not she will join in your praises where Jesus gathers His own.

To the father and mother, to the brothers and sisters, this grief is hard to bear. We learn that this death is the first in your immediate family. Others have gone, but the household thus far has been unbroken by death. Hence this is a new experience,

How every family comes to this very hour. We well remember the words uttered long ago at a funeral. After the words addressed to the mourners, the preacher turned to the friends and said, "There will be a funeral at *your house* some day." Yes, there comes a time when the holiest and best of ties are broken, and yet He who remembers that we are dust cheers us with the hope—the blessed hope —"that, as Jesus died and rose again, so them that sleep in Jesus He will bring with Him."

This hope is yours. This wife and daughter, this mother and sister, sleeps in Jesus, we trust. You, believing likewise in Him, shall know a re-union in glory.

A year ago, the thirtieth day of January last, the departed was received into full communion with the church. On Tuesday last, (October 17, 1871,) her name was registered among the redeemed.

So, dear friends, may it be with us. When our names, on earthly rolls, have the death mark drawn over them, may they shine on the glorious page of the blessed Lamb's Book of Life. Amen.